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Climb

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I brought him home, round-shouldered
and numbed up for the trip. He dozed
in the car, woke and looked
with astonishment at the hills, gold
and quince under October sun—a sight
so overwhelming that we began
to cry, he first, and then I.

CLIMB

From the porch of our house we can see
Mt. Kearsarge, the huge, blue-black
presence that tells us where we are,
and what the weather is going to be.
By night we see the red beacon
of the fire warden's tower, by day
the tower itself, a hut on stilts,
with windows on all sides, minute
in the distance.

Yesterday I climbed to the top
with a friend just home from the hospital.
She'd thought the second coming was at hand,
then found herself in a private
room, tastefully furnished, on a ward
she couldn't leave.

But yesterday we climbed,
our shirts wet with effort. We talked
and panted, stopped to look at the undersides
of sage and pink opalescent mushrooms,
and to touch the bright shoots of a balsam fir.
Near the mountain's top the trees are stunted
and misshapen by wind, their roots
exposed by rains and spring melts, and yet
they find purchase among rocks
and hold their own.

On the summit we sprawled on ledges of gray
granite, with veins and blotches of pink,
and silver-green lichen, growing like fur.
The flank of the old, old mother . . .
We looked for our houses; shreds of clouds
floated between our heads; and we saw, from above,
the muscular shoulders of a patient hawk.